

THE IRISH SITUATION.

S P E E C H

OF

MR. BLAKE, M.P.,

AT

GLASGOW, DECEMBER, 1898.

DOLLARD, PRINTINGHOUSE, DUBLIN.

1899.

*The EDITH and LORNE PIERCE
COLLECTION of CANADIANA*



Queen's University at Kingston

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TERRITET, SWITZERLAND,

December 20th, 1898.

TO THE NATIONALIST ELECTORS OF
SOUTH LONGFORD.

GENTLEMEN,

As it has not been my good fortune to meet you for the discussion of the present anxious situation, I venture to submit for your consideration a print of the views which I laid the other day before our fellow-Nationalists in Glasgow.

I am not foolish enough to expect that every sentiment in a long speech, dealing with very critical questions, should wholly commend itself to every man of you. But I do very earnestly hope that in a general and comprehensive sense these opinions may be found to harmonise with those of the great bulk of my constituents.

I am, Gentlemen, with all the good wishes of the season,

Your faithful servant,

EDWARD BLAKE.

SPEECH OF MR. BLAKE, M.P.,

TO THE

Irish Nationalists of Glasgow,

DECEMBER, 1898.

MR. JOHN FERGUSON in the Chair.

Mr. Blake said—Mr. Chairman, the proceedings of this great meeting have demonstrated, what, indeed, I well knew before, that of eloquence and judgment and knowledge of public affairs you have ample stores, and need no imported goods. Nor do I make any pretensions to be an orator ; I am but a plain man, able only to say plain things, in a plain way, to plain people like myself. And so it is that I intend to speak to you to-day. For these are critical times, in which it is well that we should take frank and calm counsel, one with another.

THE IRISH IN BRITAIN.

I am always glad, as one of the Irish from abroad, to meet with brother-Irishmen from beyond Ireland, whether in the States, or Canada, or Australia, or New Zealand ; but specially with those in Britain, who, of all the Irish, have the greatest power. For, if there be yet the boast that the ascendancy still maintains a British garrison in Ireland, you may meet it by the fact that you are an Irish garrison in Britain ; and you may again remind the English that you have a most important influence on the fate of elections and the fortune of parties here. Nor must you ever forget that, as your power, so is your responsibility. The pro-

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ceedings have relieved me of some topics; fortunately indeed, since far more remains than I can accomplish. We began by a musical inquiry, "Who Fears to Speak of '98?" and after your response I need only answer, "No one save the author of the ballad." Then Mr. Connell gave us a very eloquent statement of the foundation of our National claim.

GENERAL PROGRESS OF CAUSE.

And you, Mr. Chairman, supplied a spirited argument, much needed now, showing how far and how fast the great movement has in a generation advanced; and how little ground there is for despair of ultimate triumph, even in the midst of temporary stagnation. I fully agree. But it cannot be denied that our cause has, for the time, receded; and, though I believe it is but the ebbing of a tide, which will some day flow full and high again, yet, since it is my purpose to suggest the cause and the remedy for the present reflux, I must dwell more on the dull present than on the brighter past.

Now, everyone agrees that Nationalist Ireland is paralysed by dissension;

ATTITUDE OF SOME BRITISH HOME RULERS.

And we see in this island significant changes in some of the Parliamentary Home Rulers.

ABANDONMENT.

Some, a very few only, abandon Home Rule plainly. To these apostates you and I have no word to say.

Others propose its indefinite postponement. Why?

POSTPONEMENT BECAUSE OF LOCAL COUNCILS.

Some, forsooth, because, at last, County and District Councils are to be set up in Ireland; a great reform, doubtless, but on which no one, Liberal or Tory, ever before insulted the Irish Nation by suggesting it as a substitute or satisfaction for the National demand. That demand stands exactly where it did.

POSTPONEMENT TILL ABOLITION OF THE VETO OF THE LORDS.

Others would postpone Home Rule till after they have abolished the veto of the Lords. But are they going to postpone all reforms till then? Is this to be the sole plank? I do not believe it. Nor do I think that in my time the veto will be abolished, unless the House of Lords stands between the people and their settled will. Theoretical attacks against the Lords will just now be unavailing. We must deal with them practically, by presenting our reform, backed by the resolute voice of the people, and thus making an issue with that Chamber, on which it must bend or break. So it has been in the case of other great reforms; so it must be on Home Rule. But this can never happen if Home Rule is to be shelved the while; and those who propose that course are taking on themselves all the burden of the policy without any of the gains of its active prosecution. Their policy is suicidal.

POSTPONEMENT TILL CONSENT OF THE PREDOMINANT PARTNER.

Others would postpone, because "the predominant partner" must first be converted. I protest against this heresy of the predominant partner. The unholy compact of Union was made, not between Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales, but between Ireland and Great Britain. And, if you are, I know not on what authority, to import a term, not expressed in the Constitution, that it shall be changed only on the consent of both the contracting parties, it is the consent of Great Britain as a whole, and not of England, that should be exacted. But never, never, never will that consent be obtained by the policy of laying the question aside! It is not thus that information is diffused, ignorance enlightened, error corrected, misapprehension dissipated, prejudice removed, conscience convicted, conversion effected. Every Liberal worthy of the name must acknowledge that it was not by skulking or shelving, but by pressing onward, in spite of defeat, and all the harder because of defeat, that in just and righteous causes great majorities have been obtained, and great reforms achieved. No

otherwise can England be converted to Home Rule. We must fight to win. I do not impute bad faith ; but I am not surprised that some think these and other excuses look very like abandonment under a thin disguise of postponement.

Such are the counsels of some, who, doubtless speak for more.

POSTPONEMENT TILL IRISH REUNION.

But there remains another ground more deserving of respect. For all of these, and many besides, declare that the place of any reform must depend upon its comparative urgency ; and that the urgency of Home Rule depends largely on the solidarity, energy, persistency, and, above all, the unity with which Irishmen everywhere set themselves together as one man to make Home Rule urgent, to insist and determine that it shall stand first. And they declare that in the absence of a united Irish people and party, postponement is inevitable. Now, this touches the key-note of the piece ; and it must be listened to ; even though the demand for cordial unity under one leader may come with ill-grace from the Liberal and Radical Party at this moment.

PLACE DOES DEPEND ON UNITY.

It must be listened to ; because it is true that a cogent demand for the restoration of National Rights should have for its basis a resolute, insistent claim, both in Parliament and the country, overwhelming by its force and volume all obstacles that make for dissent, obstruction, or delay. I agree, then, that the place which Home Rule shall take depends on the unity, intensity, energy, and grim determination of us Irish. And I am not sorry. I had rather it depended on us than on any extraneous power. We, and we alone, can show that Ireland still blocks the way ; and show it we must, or we shall fail.

NATIONALIST ATTITUDE TOWARDS BRITISH HOME RULERS.

Sorry, indeed, would I be to speak one hard word of some leaders, or of the rank and file of British Home Rulers. They fought faithfully and well. I hope, and believe, they

are still true. I am grateful for their past; I am resolved to be hopeful for their future. But it is necessary to say plainly that some leaders are now making demands with which Irish Nationalists cannot comply. We, at any rate, cannot agree to set aside Home Rule; and our policy must be to secure its restoration at the earliest day to its pre-eminent place.

LINES OF ACTION OF IRISH IN BRITAIN.

Then, on what lines should Irishmen in Britain act? On two, mainly—first, to secure the return of as many genuine, active, earnest, Home Rulers as we may, regardless wholly of their other views or their party camp; and, secondly, save where the punishment of some apostate may necessitate another course, to bring British parties as near as may be to a balance, and thus to give Home Rulers their full power to sway, in the interest of Home Rule, the party politics of the Empire.

WARNING TO BRITISH HOME RULERS.

One word of warning I may be allowed to give to British Home Rulers now wavering. It is this. I know no greater weight of political responsibility than that which must crush the souls and consciences of men, who might once, indeed, have erred blindly, and in ignorance, but if they now fall back, will be sinning against light and knowledge. They, more than any other men, will be responsible, should the unhappy people, whose hearts they once moved with hope to gratitude and affection, be now by their abandonment driven to discouragement, hatred, and despair.

Reunion then is essential. We must show that Ireland is not a negligible quantity; that she is to be counted with in the Imperial Councils; I repeat the phrase, that she blocks the way.

NATIONALIST MASSES LONG FOR REUNION.

Now hardly any Nationalist denies in words the desirability, the necessity for reunion. The masses of the people are becoming increasingly earnest for it; old rancours perish; old friendships revive; unhappy memories of the recent

bitter past are fading ; glorious recollections of the days when we were all brothers in heart are freshening ; true patriotism and a passionate longing once again to co-operate for the good of the nation are filling the souls of men. Reconciliation is their watchword.

LEADERS' POWER TO PROMOTE UNION.

But the people are not organised for this work, and without the help of their leaders they must labour under the greatest difficulties. It is evidently a case for these leaders. They could not make a union without the people, but they can set the seal to that union for which the people crave. If but three men whose names are on every lip would shake hands with a good heart the work would be done. Why? Because the people are prepared. The leaders have but to crystallise the sentiment now fluid and pervasive of the mass ; they have but to solemnise the union for which all are ready. Who shall forbid the banns?

LEADERS' POWER TO OBSTRUCT UNION.

On the other hand, for the very reason I have named, the leaders can do much to delay and obstruct union. If they be indifferent or averse, captious or languid, seek excuses to differ instead of methods to agree, we may fail of our noble end. Therefore there is on these men a great load of responsibility to-day.

IS REUNION EASY ON PUBLIC ISSUES?

Now, gentlemen, postponing, as beneath contempt in this great debate, all personal questions, let me briefly glance in a practical spirit at the public issues of the day, so as to see where there be any serious difficulty in reunion. Defer for a little the dominating question of Home Rule, adjourned by the fortune of war to the next election ; and take the matters which press even in this anti-Home Rule Parliament. Let us see how we stand.

LOCAL COUNCILS ELECTIONS.

First, there are the elections under the Local Government Act—a great Act, though with great blemishes, on whose

provisions, had time allowed, I would have wished to speak. Now, here there is, after all, no radical difference. All prominent men are agreed that the Councils should be overwhelmingly National; that they should be truly representative of the political opinions of the masses; that they should demonstrate in action the fidelity and determination of Ireland on Home Rule. Mr. Dillon has proposed, and the Irish National Federation have agreed, that Nationalists of all sections should co-operate in the choice of candidates, regardless of sectional distinctions. The difference is that, while these propose that Nationalism shall be a necessary element in the choice, Messrs. Redmond and Healy propose the inclusion of some, though, as I understand, only a few, anti-Nationalists. Well, how is it in England? In November you find columns of the daily papers, with statistics, showing the political gains and losses at the local elections. As a rule, they are fought on political lines. There are some, but few exceptions. There is less reason in Ireland for exceptions, since the differences are more radical and vital, the preponderance of political opinion is more overwhelming, and the landlords have taken other security for their interests. There is more reason in Ireland for making use of all the popular machinery available to press on the popular cause, which is to be won in a British Parliament, where Ireland is in an insignificant minority. And you will find, I fancy, that the elections will be run almost wholly on political lines. (But, after all, this is a single and a temporary question. It certainly gives no ground for continued disunion; and sincere and sensible men will either agree or leave the point open, and will never make it an obstacle to unity.

THE FINANCIAL RELATIONS.

Next, there is the question of the Financial Relations—one of vast material consequence, but complicated, dry, distasteful; one on which it must obviously be hard to create even in Ireland the popular feeling it ought to evoke, and harder still to move John Bull, whose pocket would suffer through his emotions. But it requires to be pressed far more effectively than of late. Now, here there is no ground of present difference; in truth, there is already a concert, extended, but ineffective.

INEFFECTIVENESS OF A CONCERT WITH UNIONISTS.

It is ineffective. Why? Because the pace of a concerted movement is regulated by the gait of the slowest. And, indeed, the concert of Ireland has often reminded me of the concert of Europe. Because, of our Unionist allies, some are naturally more timid, or at any rate more averse to troubling the Government they support than we Nationalists. Because the Unionist hunger is partly satisfied, since it is claimed that the great landlord grant of last session is the fruit of the agitation; and thus out of the continued over-taxation of the masses, for which we have vainly sought redress, the rich, who are not overtaxed, are gratified. This, of course, makes them less hungry, but naturally it has not at all allayed our appetites.

INEFFECTIVENESS OF LIMITED CONCERTS EVEN BETWEEN NATIONALISTS.

Then not merely as to the Unionists, but even as between the Nationalists, the concert is ineffective, as are all temporary and limited alliances between permanent and general opponents. It cannot be otherwise. How can we fight with needful force and vigour, thinking only of the foe, while we feel that in our ranks are men with whom we are at chronic feud, whose weapons will be aimed at our own breasts to-morrow? Each wing is thinking not merely of the joint sally of to-day, but mainly of the long feud of the years past and to come. Each is thinking how, even by the joint operations, he may strengthen himself against his momentary ally in the approaching internecine fight. Cordial and effective co-operation thus becomes impossible. One is reminded of the ancient ceremony of the drinking of the loving cup, which still survives at city dinners. As the great gold cup goes round the table, two neighbours, in turn, together stand, and drink, and pass it. Why do two stand? Because in the old days it was needful that, in the very act of kindness, of drinking the loving cup, the neighbour should stand at the drinker's back to guard him against a stab behind. So here—we require to be guarded and to guard against our temporary allies, even in the moment of our feeble co-operation. No! neither on the Financial Relations,

nor on any other question, will you see permanent progress through temporary concerts. I have favoured them; but only as demonstrations to the public that there is no ground of difference, and so no reason against that general, permanent, corporate, organised reunion which alone is capable of marshalling and welding to good purpose the political forces of Ireland.

CONGESTED DISTRICTS QUESTION.

Next take the congested districts question. This has long been, not the most widely extended, but yet the most pressing of the material questions for Ireland. The chronic conditions of life for over half a million people are a disgrace to civilisation. And one short crop means, not distress, but destitution; for there is no reserve to fall back on, nor any lower scale of subsistence to adopt. The people have been thrust out of the rich neighbouring lands on to infertile patches of wholly inadequate extent, where to make a decent living is impossible. The remedy exists. It is to enlarge the holdings, and to remove part of the population to holdings on neighbouring lands now in pasture. For that purpose money must be spent, and the power of compulsory purchase must be granted; and this is declined. But compulsory purchase has been applied in Scotland for the Crofters. It has long been applied in mere cases of public convenience, for railways, for roads, for other improvements. But it is more necessary that men should live than that they should travel fast. Nor is there any sound objection to the conversion, by compulsory purchase, of the pasture grounds of cattle into the necessary homes of men. It is said truly that the details will be arduous, and that the work of elevating the conditions of a population so long and so cruelly depressed will be slow and gradual. But that only makes the business more pressing. The longer it will take to finish the earlier we should begin. I repeat here what I have declared in the House of Commons, that this condition is the shame and scandal of this Christian and wealthy nation. Now here there is general agreement between Nationalists, though unhappily our divisions have evoked some sneers and cavillings rather than sympathy and encouragement for the efforts to secure redress.

UNITED IRISH LEAGUE.

A great work is being done by the United Irish League, which is within the affected districts reuniting the people, restoring heart and spirit to the oppressed, and setting an example of genuine union and exertion which should animate every Irish heart.

THE LAND LAWS.

Take next the general question of the land laws. Recent decisions and reports give fresh ground for the view that there is no security that the tenant will be allowed the full value of his improvements. On this head, and on the questions of turbary, of the shortening of judicial terms, of compulsory sale, and of evicted tenants, much and pressing work is waiting to be done. And we are agreed, but for lack of union impotent.

REDUCTION OF IRISH REPRESENTATION.

Then look at the serious threats of the reduction of the representation of Ireland provided by the Union Act. This would, while the present system lasts, be a monstrous injustice. It has been painfully proved that our present numbers are inadequate, even with extraordinary courses, with agitation, with violence, to secure reasonable and seasonable attention and redress for great grievances. And it is seriously proposed to lessen those numbers, and so to diminish our too feeble constitutional strength. This is, I warn you, an imminent danger ; and it is made imminent by our divisions ; for it is our weakness that encourages the attempt. A re-united Ireland would laugh it to scorn, and obstruct it to the death.

HIGHER EDUCATION.

Lastly, turn to the question, vital to the intellectual progress of the nation, of higher education. Here there is an acknowledged grievance of the gravest kind. The Government pleads the lack of highly educated Catholics for appointments to certain high posts ; while it refuses the necessary provision for their education. The ablest youth of the vast majority of the population are by this deprivation unfairly handicapped in the highest and most arduous competitions

in the race of life, and the standard of trained intellectual power in the community is kept down. Dublin University and Trinity College have an acknowledged Protestant savour, most grateful to the nostrils of my fellow-Protestants, with not one whiff of which will they consent to part ; and they tell you Catholics it is quite suitable for you in its present strength. But when a university is proposed for you, with a savour no more Catholic than that of Dublin and Trinity is Protestant, those nostrils curl with disgust, and they will not abide it, even though it be for you. The Leader of the House of Commons acknowledges the grievance, and would be ready to apply the remedy on lines which, so far as we can judge, are satisfactory to the Hierarchy ; but he says he is powerless to persuade his followers. They would smell that whiff, even across St. George's Channel. Lord Cadogan, the responsible Minister for Ireland, has said that he shared Mr. Balfour's opinions, and wished to apply the remedy. And then, what happened ? Why, this representative of the Unionist Government, which lives upon the belief that Ireland cannot be trusted to govern herself justly, and that it is only to the breadth of view and largeness of toleration of Westminster that we can look for equity—this Unionist Minister in effect told the Orangemen and other Tories of Ulster that it was for them to give the answer, and that without their consent the grievance must remain unredressed. So that, after all, it is by the narrow prejudices and bigotry of Ulster, not by the boasted tolerance (narrow enough, God knows) of Westminster that the fate of Catholic Ireland is to be decided. Well, on this question there is, I believe, agreement in the Irish ranks. And organised effort would achieve its solution. But without re-union we cannot advance.

WHAT IS THE GENERAL RESULT.

Now I have touched on these main questions—why ? To show you that, first, there is much pressing work to be done for Ireland ; next, there is substantial agreement as to the work ; next, for its accomplishment re-union is essential ; and, lastly, it behoves us to join and do it.

HOME RULE POLICY.

I reach at last the question of the policy of a re-united Party on the dominating and vital issue—Home Rule for Ireland.

THE NATIONAL DEMAND.

Now the national demand for centuries has been the restoration of its freedom to a conquered country. That demand has in the course of time assumed various shapes. Take the constitutional movements of the last century and a quarter.

GRATTAN PARLIAMENT.

In 1782 the movement culminated in the Grattan Parliament, which was very far from separation; and which, through lack of executive responsibility to the Irish legislature, through the exclusive executive and large legislative control reserved to Britain, and through the imperfection and corruption of the constitution, failed and perished.

O'CONNELL REPEAL MOVEMENT.

Then came the O'Connell movement, which, of course, by repealing the Union of 1801, would have restored the constitution of 1782.

BUTT HOME RULE MOVEMENT.

Next followed Butt's plan of Home Rule under a federal union, dealing, as we must deal, in a practical spirit with the facts and the possibilities of the situation, recognising a common sphere of action for the common Parliament, but providing separate legislatures and executives for domestic concerns.

PARNELL MOVEMENT AND GLADSTONE PLAN.

And lastly, springing partly from the Butt movement and partly from other sources, came the Parnell movement, which resulted in the plan of Gladstone, an imperfect, but extensible form of federation, which would have given to Ireland substantial power over her domestic concerns far greater than she had under Grattan's Parliament, and which has brought us nearer to the goal of our hopes than in the struggles of the ages we have ever reached before.

CAUSES OF PROGRESS.

How did we travel so far, and come so near success? By using to the full the position of Ireland in the House of Commons, backed by a strong and persistent movement and agitation among the Irish at home and abroad. By exhibiting the spectacle of a country steadily returning in favour of the cause the unparalleled proportion of over four-fifths of its representatives, people and members alike ready to suffer, and resolved to achieve. By proving in every conceivable way, in and out of Parliament, in and out of Ireland, the intensity and sternness of our resolve to obtain our rights.

CONDITIONS OF GLADSTONE'S OFFER.

When Gladstone made his great offer (cheers)—I rejoice to hear those cheers—far distant be the day when in any Irish meeting Gladstone's name is not thus acclaimed—that offer was distinctly predicated on its acceptance as a settlement by the Irish nation. And though there were some differences of opinion over details, it was equally distinctly accepted by the Irish, and became a basis for the reconciliation of the two kingdoms. Millions here have agreed to that settlement, as founded on the justice, policy, and urgency of the case. Fortune has for a season been adverse; the zeal of many has grown cold; but I repeat my resolution to believe that the bulk here still stand true to the settlement.

IRISH ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE GLADSTONE-PARNELL SETTLEMENT.

It would be the height of folly for us voluntarily to depart from the position so attained; and we should stand, as we have ever since stood, ready to fulfil that settlement with any British party which may agree to achieve it.

POSSIBLE CHANGES.

Doubtless the imperfect character of the federation involves anomalies and inconveniences, though I believe their practical result has been greatly exaggerated; doubtless, also, some details may be susceptible of improvement. And no sensible man would shut his ears to sug-

gestions due to further thought. But any such suggestions must, from the nature of the situation, come from British Home Rulers, though they would, I trust, be candidly considered by Irish Nationalists.

STAND TO THE SETTLEMENT.

Meantime let us stand to the settlement. Surely it is not because this morsel has so far proved rather hard to swallow that we should prepare something more difficult still for the palate of the British voter! Surely we should stick to the terms! Surely we should try out to the end this proposal! The end is not yet. If and when it comes, then, and not till then, it will be time for Ireland to consider "What next?" And on that tremendous consideration she can then enter with the knowledge that she has done all that an oppressed people could do to achieve an honourable peace. That knowledge would, in the stern ensuing contest, strengthen our own hearts and our case before the world.

THE TACTICS.

Now, what should our tactics be? How you should work and vote I have already suggested. How Irishmen in Ireland should work and vote is equally clear. Absolutely independent of all other parties, the Irish Party must look to the interests of Ireland as their paramount object. As to the varying tactics, which, according to varying conditions, should be adopted by the people and their representatives, details would be futile now. They are in principle provided for us by the brilliant campaigns of the old united Party. It will be easy, as the occasion arises, to find and to apply them. This only I have to say, that my last six or seven years' experience of Parliament has convinced me that, spite of all the new rules and restrictions made or conceivable, a united Party of 80 Irishmen, well led and officered inside, and well backed outside, would very soon prove to all doubters the urgency of Home Rule. I have given you my notions frankly. But I need not add that in any matter of policy I would gladly subordinate my individual opinions to the better judgment of an united Party.

ESSENTIALS OF REUNION.

And now let me suggest the essentials of reunion. Indeed I have already foreshadowed them. There must be no recriminations, no proscriptions, no condemnations, no recantations. We must give credit for honesty of intention in those from whom we have differed. We must respect past divergencies of opinion; we must remember the good service given in comradeship in the good old days; and forget the strife and alienation of later evil days; we must recognise that there is no cause for continued division, that Ireland requires reunion, and that we should become brothers in feeling once again. This is all! And to you and me this looks at first sight as easy as it is right.

THE DIFFICULTY.

But now I come to the trouble; from principle and policy to men and passions; from things purely public to things largely personal.

LEADERSHIP.

The question of leadership is sometimes vital; generally important; but just now relatively insignificant. Gentlemen, the army is at stake; and if the army be disbanded there will be no one to be led. Now, if the whole body would only co-operate by counsel, advice, and support, more will be done under the weakest chairman likely to be chosen than can be done by separate bands under the strongest array of rival leaders. In truth, while one main object of each is to prove the others in the wrong, the more brilliant the leaders the worse for the common cause—since their brilliancy is displayed rather against the alienated friend than the common foe. Then let chairmen and would-be chairmen, king, and king-makers, recognize, the truth, and, burying rivalries, ambitions, rancours, and ill-feeling, come together with good and honest hearts to devise good things for our country!

REAL UNION DEMANDS REAL UNIONISTS.

But it is real, cordial union that we want. Sham union is worse than useless, and without a spirit of union no good can come of conferences about unity. Now here is my

difficulty. It is by men who ardently long for union, who believe in its possibility, who are convinced of its necessity, who are determined to achieve it, who are ready to that end for any toil or sacrifice, it is by such men only that it can be achieved.

MR. DILLON'S ATTITUDE.

Mr. Dillon is, as he has assured you, a strong advocate of, and a firm believer in, union. He has publicly recognized that, in order to settle personal questions and alleviate personal animosities, which appear persistent, it may be needful to the achievement of his end that he should retire from the chair, and he has expressed his readiness to do so. I congratulate him on his attitude. I do not, indeed, envy him in his present place; but I own I should envy him the proud place, infinitely higher than the chairmanship, he would occupy in the hearts of Ireland as plain John Dillon, who stepped down and out in order to secure to his country the blessing of a united nation.

MR. REDMOND'S ATTITUDE.

Mr. Redmond, I regret to say, does not seem such an ardent friend or convinced believer. He said a while ago that when certain conditions which he laid down were met, "It may be taken for granted that I and my colleagues will not be found anxious to stand in the way of reasonable union." Well, but that is very cold comfort! "Not anxious to stand in the way," forsooth. But we want him to be anxious to find the way, to make smooth the rough places in the way, to walk in the way, and to press forward in the way of re-union. It is not by agreeing "not to be anxious to stand in the way" that people can come together. They must approach, they must determine on union to succeed. Ah, gentlemen, it is easy, sadly easy, to find excuses to differ; and unless we are resolved to agree we shall stand apart. Mr. Redmond's speech indicates that he is largely satisfied with those temporary and limited concords of which I spoke, but I have shown that they will not do. And then he goes on to say:—"It is absolute folly to expect nine or ten Parnellites to walk back into Committee Room 15, and there submit their political con-

sciences to the decision of the majority of men who, in their opinion, brought untold dishonour and injury to the country." But no one proposes anything of the kind. I have stated a basis of union. Judge how far it differs from this suggestion. Nor is the tone at all encouraging to those who, in the hope of the growth of friendlier sentiments, have for this long time abstained from stating their version, naturally different, of past events.

THE PROPOSED CONFERENCES.

Now, Mr. Dillon, in October, here proposed a conference of five men nominated by him with five nominated by Mr. Redmond. The Limerick Board of Guardians later proposed a conference of all Nationalist members, to which Mr. Dillon at once agreed.

MR. REDMOND'S PROPOSAL AS TO MR. HEALY.

Mr. Redmond did not take early notice of either proposal; but late, when it became needful to deal with the Limerick plan, he objected to it as impracticable, and preferred a modification of Mr. Dillon's proposal by the addition to the conference of five men nominated by Mr. Healy. Now, in the unfortunate relations subsistent between Mr. Healy and Mr. Dillon, it would, I think, be better that conferees should be nominated by the Irish Party rather than by Mr. Dillon. And there is, I think, no doubt that among them should be Mr. Healy and some of his friends, a view which I understand to be taken also by Mr. Dillon. But Mr. Redmond's proposal is, I conceive, inadmissible.

MR. HEALY'S RELATIONS TO THE IRISH PARTY.

It is not for either Mr. Redmond or Mr. Dillon to define, still less is it for either of them to terminate, Mr. Healy's relations to the Irish Party. That gentleman indeed may not have been, according to my poor notions, of late years a good party man. It is true, as Mr. Redmond says, that he has an Organization of his own, a Convention of his own, a Fund of his own, a Paper of his own. It is true that he does not generally attend party meetings or give counsel as to party action. It

is true that his voice is generally raised in tones, not of support, but of divergence and attack. But still he remains, at any rate in form, a member of the Irish Party; and it is fortunately beyond the power, even if it were the wish, of any other individual to read him out of that party. But this is what Mr. Redmond wants Mr. Dillon to do. All that Mr. Redmond can reasonably ask Mr. Dillon to say is that, in view of Mr. Healy's public attitude and position, he should be one of the chosen conferees. This is reasonable, and I have shown the way.

A SUGGESTED PROCEDURE.

Perhaps the best course might be to let the Limerick plan, which has acquired such great importance from its general adoption by the Irish boards, take effect. Then the general discussion and conclusion by the whole Nationalist body on the desirability and principles of reunion would result, if thought well, in the choice by the Parnellite Party and the Irish Party, each for themselves, of a small number of conferees, of course including Mr. Healy and some of his friends, for the discussion of any details which it might be convenient to remit for the report of such a conference; no one being bound by any vote.

MR. REDMOND AGAIN.

But here again I am not greatly encouraged; for Mr. Redmond, as to these details, has said that he is not sanguine of results, that, if Mr. Dillon thinks there is a basis of reunion, he should agree to the proposal for a meeting of Parnellites, Dillonites and Healyites, and that his own attitude is that he is ready to go into such a conference and consider any proposals that may be put before it. Now, I should neither expect nor desire the honour of being chosen; but a great many of us would, I am glad to say, be ineligible under this plan, for there are a great many of us who, like myself, are neither Parnellites, Dillonites, nor Healyites, who are just supporters of the principle of unity, and loyal to the decisions of the Party, giving unflinching support to its policy, whatever it may be, and constitutional support to its chairman, whoever he may be. But the tone

is not encouraging. I would rather hear Mr. Redmond say that he is sanguine of results, that he thinks there is a basis of reunion, and that he is ready to propose it. In short, gentlemen, I would like to witness a spirit of greater faith, hope, and charity.

MR. HEALY'S ATTITUDE.

Then, what of Mr. Healy? He said lately, at his Convention, that it was "a remarkable fact that the chief causes of disturbance for the last seven or eight years in Ireland have not had reference to principle, but have had reference to this vague thing called leadership." And he suggested the abandonment of the election of a chairman. In the same speech he used these remarkable words—"I don't wish to take up the attitude of absolute hostility to any English party in the State; and I think the mistake we have made in the past was to tie ourselves to the tail of a single political party. Our countrymen in America at one time all belonged to the Democratic Party. Many of them found that inconvenient, and a number of them joined the Republican Party; and, undoubtedly, the fact that Ireland in America was not associated with a single political party enabled the other political party to take up a friendlier attitude towards Ireland's rights and claims." This looks as if he advised, not that we should be independent of British political parties, but that we should divide and attach ourselves as he says they do in America. But, so divided and attached, we should be, indeed, powerless. Where would be the strength of the Irish voters in Britain if they voted as belonging half to the Tory and half to the Liberal Party? Where would be the strength of the Irish Nationalist representation in the House of Commons if it voted half in the Tory and half in the Liberal ranks? No, gentlemen; let us keep our weight and our strength together, and throw it all on whichever side shall at the moment make most for the National cause. I cannot see that a policy of non-election of a chairman and of the division of our forces would make for unity; nor has the attitude of Mr. Healy in the past, or his letter to the Limerick Board in the present, filled my heart with hope.

GENERAL CONCLUSION.

Candidly speaking, I do not see that either of these gentlemen has as yet given signs of that cordial adhesion to reunion which is essential to success, and therefore I fear that a conference just now may fail.

GROUNDS OF HOPE.

On what, then, do I base my hope? On the growing strength of the popular demand, on the flowing tide of National sentiment, on the rise of a spirit of self-abnegation among leaders, which may prove by practical action, stronger than mere words, their whole-souled devotion to their country.

DANGER AHEAD.

May the proof come soon! For I warn you that, though Ireland's cause be immortal, yet this like other phases of her struggle cannot last for ever, nay, will not under existing conditions much longer live. And should it unhappily so end, I do not choose to conjecture by what weltering chaos it may be followed, or how many weary years of degradation may elapse ere we regain our present ground.

DUTY'S CALL.

Meantime, what is left for you and me, men of the rank and file of the movement? To strain every nerve to secure the reconciliation on which success depends; but anyway to fight on all the harder the more desperate the struggle; to use cordial sympathy towards friends, patience and long suffering with separated brethren, stern determination towards the adversaries of our country; to see to it that, whoever may fail or falter, each of us stands firm, doing his own work, and proving himself the faithful servant of our holy and sacred cause.

